



Readiness for Death open'd and urg'd.

I N A
Funeral SERMON

On the Occasion of the

D E A T H

Of the late

Mrs. *K E L L E Y*;

Preach'd at

New-Court, Little Lincolns-Inn Fields,

June 14. 1724.

By JAMES WOOD,

L O N D O N:

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On the Location of the

TABLE

Of the late



Mrs. A. E. N.

New-Court, Little Lincoln Inn Fields,

427-412001

BY JAMES WOOD.

Y O D Y I

THE DEDICATION

TO

Mrs. Anna Maria Kelley.

MADAM,

T *IS in compliance with your Desire, that the following Sermon on the Occasion of the Death of your late excellent Mother, is thus made publick. When I had consented that it should be at your Disposal, I could not be at a loss to whom to inscribe it.*

The Things treated of here, are not the Nostrums of any particular Party. They cannot be reckon'd in the Number of indifferent Things. Since it is appointed unto all Men once to Die, it

must be the Duty and Interest of all to get ready for this great Change : 'Tis with a View to this, that we have a written Gospel, a standing Ministry. Ordinances and Providences are design'd to instruct us in this grand Point; and influence to a correspondent Practice. Such only answer the End of Being, and are qualified for a true Enjoyment of Life, who are fit to Die.

We are apt to think, that Intimacy with the Grave does only become the hoary Head: That such may be excus'd from providing to leave it, who are but lately come into the World. The Temptation works more strongly when all is easy and agreeable in our outward Circumstances. A flowing Estate, that puts it in our Power to gratify every Appetite, often betrays us into too violent a liking of what is seen, and temporal : And the more Charms we behold in our present Situation, the less shall we love to think of changing it. Neither Youth nor Wealth can protect

Dedication.

V

us against the Arrest of Death, however we may be deceiv'd by these i nto a Forgetfulness of it. As the Rich and Poor, so Old Men and Children mingle Dust in the Grave, the House appointed for all the Living.

You need much Grace to resist and overcome the Temptations which your Age and plentiful Circumstances expose you to. It is not a small Privilege, that in seeking to God for it, you can address him as the God of your Fathers. This will help to a Filial Boldness in your Supplications: And as the Throne of Grace becomes the Place of your Delights, your Soul will prosper. This is the way to enjoy your present Affluence with the Divine Blessing; to be prepar'd to leave this World at God's Call; and take Possession of the durable Riches and Righteousness, which he has provided for them that love him.

That God would sanctify the late awful Stroke, to the making you a successful

*ful Follower of your pious Relatives, that
are gone before you, that you may with
them, after a Life of holy Obedience
on Earth, fully inherit the Promises,
shall be the fervent Prayer of,*

M A D A M,



Your most Faithful,

Obliged, Humble Servant,

Grays-Inn Lane,
Jun. 17. 1724.

JAMES WOOD.

MATT. XXIV. 44.

Therefore be ye also Ready : For in such an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

THE Words I have read were pronounced by the Head of the Church, *the great God, our Saviour*. He spoke them to his Disciples ; and the Occasion was this.

Our Lord having taken his final Farewel of the Temple, there follows immediately a Prediction of its Ruin. Tho' this Prophecy did primarily respect the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the Period of the *Jewish* State, the Calling of the *Gentiles*, and the setting up Christ's Spiritual Kingdom among Men, yet as the Old Testament Predictions, which referr'd to the Affairs of the *Jews*, look'd farther, even to the Gospel-Church, the Kingdom of the Messiah, and are thus expounded under the New Testament ; so this Prophecy, under the Type of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, carries our Views as far forward as to the General Judgment.

The Disciples had ask'd concerning the *Times when these Things should be* : our Lord checks their Curiosity in this Particular ; for *it is not for us to know the Times and Seasons, which the Father*

bath put in his own Power. They had enquir'd further, what should be the *Sign* of these surprising *Revolutions*; what should be the *Prelude* to them; how they should be introduc'd: this Question he answers fully, yet in a way that tended more to engage their Caution, than indulge a prying inquisitive Humour; more to prepare them for the important Issues he had predicted, than to give them distinct Ideas of the Events themselves.

You have the practical *Application* of the Prophecy from the thirty second Verse of this Chapter.

When God warn'd a thoughtless World of approaching Ruin by *Noah*, that *Preacher of Righteousness*, they slighted the Notice given them; persisted in fleshly Pleasures and worldly Business, 'till *Wrath* came upon them to the uttermost: thus will it be (says our Lord) with Multitudes at my Coming, both at the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and in the *Day of Judgment*. A continual *Readiness* must be your *Safety*. If you would not be surprised, terrified, hurt, when I shall call you by Death to your particular Judgment, live in the daily Expectation of this Event; make answerable Provision for it: *Blessed is the Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

If the good Man of the House had known in what Watch the Thief would have come, he would have watched, and would not have suffer'd his House to be broken up: therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

We wake in vain, if we do not get ready. 'Tis not enough to look for these Things, but we must be diligent, that we may be found of him in Peace, without Spot, and blameless^b.

We have our Lord to attend upon, must therefore have our *Loin*s girt, and our *Lamps* trimmed : A Cause to be tried, and must have our Plea ready : A Reckoning to settle, and must have our Accounts clear : An *Inheritance* to enter upon, and must be made *meet* to partake of it.

In the Text you may observe,

I. A *Duty* exhorted to. 'Tis a very comprehensive one indeed, one that is of common Concern, and equally obliges all. 'Tis this, a getting ourselves *ready* for our Lord's Coming.

II. Here are *Reasons* suggested, in the way of Argument, or Motive, the better to influence our Compliance.

The Son of Man cometh ; and he will come in *such an Hour as ye think not*. You see that the Duty is urg'd from the Consideration of the *Certainty* of Christ's Coming to every Man at Death : and our being *Strangers* to the particular Time of his thus Coming.

When I have spoken to these Heads in a *doctrinal* way, I shall endeavour to assist you in making a suitable, profitable *Application*, and Improvement of this Subject.

I begin,

I. With *opening* what our Lord recommends here, as a *Duty* of common Concern, our getting us *ready* for his Coming.

This Duty may be illustrated by its Opposite. What makes us *unready* for Death ? Why, being in a natural State, under the Guilt of Sin, and Wrath of God ; tho' intimate with this World, yet unacquainted with a better ; unpractis'd in the *Life of the Righteous* ; unfurnish'd as to the Gra-

ees of the Spirit ; *Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, without God, or any Foundation for a warrantable Hope.* Those whom Christ finds at Death in such Circumstances, must *die in their Sins* ; therefore die everlastingly.

There may be an *Habitual*, where there is not an *Actual Readiness* for Death. This is the Case, when tho' *Partakers of a divine Nature* our Affections are entangled with the World, and the Things of it ; our Consciences under a lively and distressing Sense of Guilt ; when our Graces are weak ; our Evidences obscure ; and we go doubting and fearing into the Grave. Many go off this Stage *cheerfully*, into *Blackness of Darkness for ever* ; while others, who breath out their Spirits into the Redeemer's Hands, may have little, or no *lively Hope in their Death*.

The Reverse to these must constitute *habitual and actual* Preparedness to die ; it must take into it a right *Knowledge of God* ; a true *Faith* in him ; an unfeigned *Love* to him ; a deliberate *Choice* of him ; a serious and unreserved *Surrender* of our whole selves to his Service ; a practical Endeavour after *Conformity* both to his Nature and Will ; his *preceptive*, and his *providential Will*, and *Perseverance* in thus *well-doing*.

He who walks in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord, in a Gospel-Sense, blameless ; acts in Life daily, as he would be found doing when Death comes ; this Person is ready, and may look for an Entrance's being minister'd unto him abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ^c.

I shall fix my Thoughts upon the following Particulars, which may let you farther into the Nature of this Duty.

Readiness for Death supposes,

1. That a Christian keeps a *watchful* Eye over his own Heart.

I take it for a *Principle*, that until we are *translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*, by his renewing Grace, we are utterly unprovided for our Lord's Coming. We are not Subjects capable of the heavenly Glory ; but really *Vessels of Wrath, fitted for Destruction*, of which we shall be swallowed up at Death. But imparted Grace must shew its growing, transforming Influence upon Heart and Life, if we would joyfully account for this Talent.

Sins of *Ignorance* and *Infirmity*, when guarded against, and mourn'd over, are consistent with a regular Peace of Conscience, with the Favour and Friendship of God ; but *presumptuous Sins* wound us deeply ; they present God to the awaken'd Mind as an *Avenger*, and crowd with ten thousand Terrors the very Thought of Dying ; and if a real Christian were not liable to run into these *great Transgressions*, David (*the Man after God's own Heart*) had not pray'd so earnestly to be preserv'd from them^d.

The Heart is the Source and Spring of moral Good and Evil ; 'tis from this abundant Treasure are brought forth *Evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, False-Witnesses, Blasphemies, and all the Things which defile a Man*. The many Inconsistencies in the Christian Life, by which his Peace is disturb'd, and the Profession he makes too often reproach'd, arise chiefly from this *Heart's not being kept with greater Diligence*.

How large their Number, who are above regarding even *Decency* in Life ? who are *open* Ene-

^d Ps. xix. 13.

mies to Heaven ? and a Dishonour to the rational human Nature ? there are many, who, like the *Pharisees*, keep only the *Outside of the Dish and Platter clean*, while 'tis full of abominable *Filthiness within*. It is the Grace of God, this alone, which will make us as careful about what he only sees, who knows all things, as what is done upon the *House-top*, and in the Face of the Sun ; as conscientious in watching against the first Motions of Sin within us, as sincere in our Repentance for *Heart-Wickedness*, as if the inmost Recesses of the Soul were as much under the Observation of the whole World, as the formal and finished Actions of Life.

As this Watchfulness over our Hearts is a Preservative against Sin, and the Means of a more close and circumspect Walking with God, it must contribute more than a little to our *Readiness* for meeting Christ at Death.

2. A Christian's *Readiness* for Death depends much upon his *Caution* in conversing with this World. Things present and sensible have too great a Power over Spirits in Flesh. We are apt to be struck and impress'd by these Things ; the more extravagantly we *value* them, the more intensely in Proportion shall we *pursue* them ; the more shall we riot upon the *Enjoyment* of them ; and we shall think of *leaving* them with answerable Pain and Distress of Mind.

Besides,

A better World is discharg'd from our Thoughts, as this World and its Concerns do make a Property of them. We under-value Heaven by over-rating Earth ; and are caught in an ill Posture, when Death surprizes us, mindless of that *other better heavenly Country, and building for ourselves Tabernacles here*.

David,

David, in the quiet Possession of the Throne of *Judah*, writes himself a *Stranger and Sojourner* as all his *Fathers* were^c. He expresses in those Words the *Temper of Mind* with which he was affected to all sublunary Good : otherwise there would have been nothing remarkable and discriminating in the Speech ; for every *Man*, even in his best *Estate*, is altogether *Vanity* : But this is fully clear'd up in another Passage of the same Author's ; he appeals to God that he *was a weaned Child*^f.

Moderation in our Temper, and Conduct towards these Things, will follow upon a full Persuasion of their *Meanness*, their unsatisfying and perishing Nature. The Apostle *Paul* sets the Case in this Light, when he says, *the Fashion of this World passing away, we should rejoice here, as tho' we rejoiced not ; weep, as tho' we wept not ; buy, as tho' we possess'd not ; and use the World without abusing it*^g.

When our Affections are disengag'd, and loose from this World, and set upon a more noble and enduring Substance, there will be little more of Difficulty or Pain in laying aside these Bodies, than in shifting our Dress. What we never lov'd to Excess, we can give up without Regret ; and pleasurably launch, tho' into a rough Sea, when it conveys us to the Place where we have long lodg'd our Hearts and Treasure.

3. There is suppos'd in this *Readiness* to meet with Christ a laying ourselves out, that we may serve our Generations according to the Will of God. A careful Imitation of his Example, whose Life was one continued Scene of Service ; who went

^c Psal. xxxix. 12.

^f 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

^g Psal. cxxxi. 2.

about doing good^h ; an improving every Talent, as knowing it to be a Trust ; and that we must e're long give an Account of our Stewardship.

He cannot *die to the Lord*, who has *liv'd to himself*. To see our Working-Time at an End, when we have *stood idle all the Day*, have perverted the Design of our Creation, been as disregards of God as tho' we had no Dependence upon him, how shocking this Prospect ! No Wonder, if such dread accounting with God, whose Lives have been wasted in the Drudgery of the Devil, and Service of their Lusts. But in the Article of Death, this is Matter of Rejoycing, *the Testimony of a good Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not by fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the Worldⁱ.*

Our good Works are not *meritorious* of Heaven, *for by Grace are we saved* ; yet no Man is encourag'd to look to the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal Life, who has not pursued Glory, Honour, and Immortality, by a patient Continuance in Well-doing.

Our Saviour himself, when about to leave this World, addresses thus to the Father, *I have glorified thee on Earth ; I have finish'd the Work thou gavest me to do, and now, Father, glorify me with thy self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was^k.* Not unlike this was the Profession made by the holy Apostle Paul, when in View of his Grave, *I am now Ready to be offer'd up, and the Time of my Departure is at Hand ; I have fought a good Fight ; I have finish'd my Course ; I have kept the Faith ; henceforth there is laid up*

^h Acts x. 38.

^k John xvii. 4, 5.

ⁱ 2 Cor. i. 11.

for me a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing¹. The Reflection upon a well-spent Life, one in which he had not done the Work of the Lord negligently, but labour'd to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man, this was join'd with the pleasing Prospect of God's Favour, and Acceptance above. The Fruit of Righteousness is Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever. And lest we should conclude, that there was any thing in this peculiar to his high Character, who was an Apostle, and not behind the chief of them, he lets us know, that whoever copied out his way of Living, that Person had a Right to his Comforts, and Triumphs, when he came to die. When our Fruit is unto Holiness, the End will be Life everlasting; but we must live the Life of the Righteous (a Life of sincere, impartial, affectionate Obedience) to have our latter End like his.

4. Such delight themselves in God, and are much with him, who are ready for Death. Cold and infrequent Converse begets Strangeness: thus we grow shy of God; and while this is the Case, it must be very uneligible to make such an Appearance before him, as does immediately follow upon our being unhous'd from these Bodies.

As Christians, our Conversation should be in Heaven; our Affections center on Things above; Christ should dwell in our Hearts by Faith, as the Object of our deliberate and pleasing Meditation; and from his Favour should flow our chief Joys. He whose Practice of Duty is proportion'd to his

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Knowledge of it, who aims in every Duty at the Glory of God, and Acceptance with him, who mourns over dead Affections and unactive Graces, endeavouring to be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord; who sets the Lord always before him, lives a Life of Faith and Dependence upon him, his Fellowship being with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus our Lord; he who can retire from the World, and all that is amusing in it, to God as to his Rest, this Person is prepar'd for all Events: Nothing can hurt him, who is thus the Follower of that which is good.

Blessed be God, rare as such Instances of exact and shining Piety are, 'tis far from being impossible to attain such an Assurance of the Divine Favour, as will carry the Soul above the Love of Life, and determine it *to desire rather to depart, and to be immediately and for ever with Christ*, which is the best of all. Though Doubts about our Interest in the Love and Covenant of God may render the very *Thought of Death* uncomfortable, he must receive the Summons with a very different Temper of Mind, who can say, *I know, that my Redeemer liveth: and tho' while at Home in the Body, I am absent from the Lord, as soon as absent from the Body, I shall be present with him, and for ever satisfied with his Likeness. Death cannot separate me from his Love: No, 'twill place me under the fullest, strongest Rays of his Divine Glory, in whose Favour is Life; his, whom not having seen I love; in whom, tho' now I see him not, yet believing I rejoice, with an unspeakable and glorious Joy.*

Once more,

5. To be ready for Christ's Coming, we must see that we are settled in the Belief of a future State of Blessedness; and often make this present

to

to our Minds, by *that Faith which is the Evidence of unseen things*^m.

We must be *grounded and settled* in this Faith. The most powerful *Motives* to Obedience, the most reviving *Supports* under present Sufferings, arise from a firm Persuasion of the Reality of eternal things. We shan't grow *weary of well doing*, while assur'd *that we shall reap, if we faint not : but forgetting the things that are behind, press forward*. The Joy set before us, the *Recompence of Reward*, will encourage the *trembling Heart*, and strengthen the *feeble Knees*.

And as to the *evil things, which we may receive at the Hands of the Lord*, how obvious the Influence of this Faith upon our Resolution and Patience ? *Stephen saw the Heavens open'd, and the Son of God ready to receive him ; and this bore up his Spirits under the cruel Rage of his Murderers*ⁿ. And *Paul* lets us into the Reason of his shewing such a noble Neglect of Life ; opens the Spring of his Fortitude and Intrepidity under manifold multiplied Sufferings, *We know that if this earthly House of our Tabernacle were dissolv'd, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*^o.

A Child of God may not always have the same Measure and Degree of Evidence, as to his personal Interest in the better World : Nay, sometimes Satan may so far prevail in his Temptations, that the Christian may begin to question the reality of a future State ; or whether there be in Truth such a Place as that *Heaven*, he has so often pleas'd himself in the Expectation of.

^m Hebr. xi. 1.

ⁿ Acts vii. 56.

^o 2 Cor. 4 last compar'd with the fifth Chapt. beg.

This is indeed a *fiery Dart*. The Soul is now cast into vast Confusion and Disorder; and it will cost him many a Prayer and Tear, before a good Man is thoroughly settled again, after such a Fall. There is somewhat peculiarly dreadful in the Case, when the Enemy's permitted to *push* thus *hard at us*, in our last Minutes: it must behove us to lay in Provision against such an Assault; to have our Minds furnish'd with Proofs and Evidences of so important an Article, and our Faith daily strengthen'd in it.

Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel. We are assur'd by an infallible Authority, that *there is a Rest which remains for the People of God.* He that believes this Testimony sets to his Seal that God is true; and cannot want either fit Motives to Obedience, or an effectual Antidote against inordinate Fears of Death, while he lives under the Power of this Faith.

Again,

We should often by Faith make these invisible eternal things *present* to our Minds, if we would be *ready* for Death.

We may not only be persuaded of their *Reality*, but in this Light view those *distant* Events, as at Hand, *even at the Door*. And while I behold myself upon the very Borders of *Emanuel's Land*, but a short Stage between me and the ineffable Joy of my Lord, what *Manner of Person shall I* endeavour to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? thus shall I run, and not grow weary; walk, and not faint; see to the Cultivation of all the Graces of the Spirit of God; have my Fruit unto Holiness; and whether it be at Midnight, Cock-crowing, or in the Morning my Lord shall come, may meet him with Joy, instead of Grief?

In short, he who keeps a strict Eye over his own Heart, who lives much within himself, and
converses

converses with this World as one whose main Concerns lie in another, he who does all the Good that's within the Reach of his Power, when Opportunities of Service offer, he who endeavours to live with God, under the lively Apprehensions of approaching Death, and the Glory that shall follow it to every sincere Christian, that Person may be said to have attain'd to the *Readiness* which our Lord recommends ; *They who do these things shall never be moved.*

II. We are next to look into the *Arguments*, by which our Compliance with this Duty is urg'd in my Text.

I. Our Lord infers the Necessity of our Obedience from the *Certainty* of his Coming ; *Be ye ready, for the Son of Man cometh. q. d.* As I have given you Being, intrusted you with Talents, and a written Rule for your Direction about the Improvement of them, so I shall come to each of you in the proper Season, to enquire how ye have conducted in the Tryal-State I have appointed you, that I may *render to every Man according to his Works.*

The Instances are so very few of those who were taken from *this* to *another* World, in the way of *Translation*, that they must be bent upon caviling, who would object to the Apostle's Saying, *that it is appointed to All Men once to die.* Death finishes our *probationary* State, *after Death is the Judgment.* Now, how full the Force of the Argument to our being *ready* for this momentous Change, which *none* shall escape ? which fixes Mens Doom correspondently to the Condition it finds them in, whether gracious, or graceless ?

Must I die ? does *Devise, Knowledge, and Counsel cease in the Grave* ? is there *no room for Repent-*

ance, when this Day of my Visitation is over ? O the Necessity which lies upon me to be prepar'd for Death, when I must be *lost* to all Eternity, if I am *unfit* to die ?

The Argument loses little of its Strength, when a *good* Man is press'd hereby to seek an *actual* Readiness for Death : all his *Comfort* depends upon it ; and the most considerable *Advantages* attend such Preparedness : for those who are *ready*, go in with Christ to the Marriage, and the Door is shut. We would purchase this *Meetness* to see our Lord, and follow him, at the Expence of all created Nature, were this at our Dispose, when we come to die. Let us but think of Things *now*, as we shall *then*, when we shall speak with most *Feeling*, and least *Affectation*, and we shall see enough to convince us of the Aptitude and Propriety of this particular Argument, mention'd in the Text.

But there is instanc'd farther,

2. To recommend this Counsel, the utter *Uncertainty* we are under, as to the particular Time when our Lord will come.

There is somewhat in this Thought plainly *Argumentative*, whether we suppose it to be directed to *Sinners*, or to *Saints*.

First, The Reasoning is strong, and conclusive, if we conceive of it as directed to *Sinners*.

One of the strongest Bands, by which Satan holds his Vassals, is the Needfulness of *immediate* Piety, since there is Time before them for *Repentance*, which will set all Matters right between God and them. Many, who suspend their Obedience to the Calls of the Gospel for the *present*, will tell you, that it is not because they have

a low Opinion of Religion, but they apprehend that its Concerns may for *a while* be postpon'd with Safety, since they are resolv'd by the Help of God to change their Lives before they *die*; and to make up for their present Neglects by their future Diligence and Industry. These poor Creatures, talk however *plausibly*, yet under the Power of a grand *Mistake*. They take for granted many things, not one of which but is uncertain; and then reason with Pleasure and Freedom upon an *imaginary* Scheme. They conclude, that Death is at a *Distance*, but how unwarrantably, when they are *crush'd as easily as the Moth, and in a Moment may go down into the Grave?* They take it for granted, that when *sick* they shall have all the *Grace* which is necessary to fit them for Death and Heaven; but they have no such Assurance from him, who is the Author and Giver of it: If they *lie* upon a sick Bed, and are not *hurried* on a sudden into another World, they may be so *shatter'd* as not to be able to think at all, or so *harden'd*, as not to be able to think to Purpose.

Now, if *all our Times are in the Hands of the Lord*, and when we imagine ourselves farthest from the Grave, we may be treading on the very Brink of it; if we cannot command the Exercise of our *Reason*, much less the *Graces* of the Spirit of God, and yet if we die unjustified, unsanctified, must perish for ever; there must be Propriety in the Reasoning when we are commanded to be *ready, because when we think not, our Lord may come.*

Secondly, The Argument is apt and conclusive, even in reference to the *Children of God.*

Is it safe to drop our Watch, tho' but for a *Moment*, when that very Moment may prove our *last?* to indulge to this, or the other lawful thing
in

in an inordinate way, when Judgment may anticipate the propos'd Gratification?

Let it be allow'd, that I know in some measure the Worth of the Divine Favour by what I have *experienc'd*, and shall I dare to *do*, or *forbear* any thing upon the Presumption of my renewing my Peace with God, when in the very Instant that I use this venturous Freedom, I may see the *Hand-writing on the Wall*? die in Darkness and Horrour, which is a *double Death*?

Upon the whole,

If Christ will come, tho' he may seem to tarry, and we are undone if not *ready* to meet him; if his Coming is not fix'd to such a *Year*, but may be the important Discovery of the next *Moment* of Life, it obliges all, as they wish to be *found in Peace*, to have *Confidence*, instead of being *asham'd* or *afraid* at his Coming, to behave as those who constantly wait for his Approach. Neither *wise nor foolish Virgins* should *slumber, or sleep*, while *this* Passage is Part of the Redeemer's Gospel, that when we *think not*, our Lord cometh.

It now remains,

III. and lastly, That we *apply* this Subject.

1. How great is the *Deceitfulness of Sin*, when so many live in the World, and pass out of it, as regardless of *Death*, as if their Impieties made them *immortal*! they are but few comparatively, of whom this is not true. The Generality die, before they have even come so far as to *resolve* upon any thing in Favour of Religion; and very many who have done no more than resolve about it, their *Purposes* never ripening to *Execution*. If Men were to *die* like Brutes, it would be some Abatement of their Folly, tho' they *liv'd* like them; *making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts*

Lusts of it : But if, as *rational*, we are *immortal*, the Extremes of Pleasure or Pain to be our Portion, according to the Quality of our present Behaviour in the World, 'tis really wonderful, that for a *Mess of Meat* a thinking Creature should sell his *Birth-right*, and for the present *Pleasures of Sin*, which last but a *Moment*, consent to be punish'd with everlasting *Destruction*. Whatever is the formal Reasoning of his *Mind*, this is the Language of every Man's *Practice*, who lives and dies a Stranger to serious Religion.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End, choose the one thing needful, that good Part which shall never be taken away from them.

2. Let it excite our *Thankfulness* to God, that he is pleas'd to allow us to *live*, when we are so very unfit to *die*. The best of us were once *Darkness*, though now *Light in the Lord* ; we are all *Children of Wrath by Nature* ; bring along with us *Guilt* and *Corruption* sufficient to justify God in making us the Instances of his powerful Vengeance in Time, and for ever. If we carry our Views some Years backward, we can find the Time, wherein, if God had enter'd into Judgment with his Servants, we could not have stood ; but it has pleas'd him to spare us, 'till we have obtain'd *Mercy*. How many have been cut down, laid like *Sheep in the Grave*, in their Ignorance and Enmity, while the destroying Angel has had his Commission restrain'd as to us, that he might not hurt us ?

'Tis to be fear'd, there are some in this Assembly who have not been led to *Repentance by the Riches of God's Goodness, Patience, Forbearance, and Long-suffering*. Can you see yourselves out of Hell, under the Calls of the Gospel, follow'd with the Offers of Grace and Salvation, though
your

your Sins have cried aloud for *that Death which is the Wages of them*, and not admire with sincere and affectionate Gratitude the *Grace wherein ye stood* ? the *Vine-Dresser* well knew, that if you were cut down, you must be cast into the Fire ; therefore he has repeated this Address in Favour of such thoughtless Creatures, *Lord, spare them yet this Year also* : Let me assure you, that to be unaffected with such Mercy is far from being among the smallest of your Sins ; nothing does bid fairer for the making you of *all Creatures the most miserable*.

3. Let us improve every Help that is vouchsaf'd us, for getting ready to meet our Lord.

Sinner, *Agree with thine Adversary, while yet in the way with him. Kiss the Son, while his Anger is kindled but a little. Beg Grace from Heaven to comply with Gospel-Offers. Give not Sleep to your Eyes, nor Slumber to your Eye-lids, 'till you have Reason to hope, that you are passed from Death to Life, become Children of the first Resurrection, over whom the second Death shall have no Power. Use all the Notices given you at the Expence of others of the Frailty of your present State, to make you speedy, diligent, and in good earnest in the Affairs of your Soul and Eternity.*

Christians, do you act as those who *wait for the Coming of your Lord*. Remember that the Measure of Grace, that may enable you to bear an *easy Cross*, is not sufficient to fortify and encourage you to enter on so *great a Change*. 'Tis a very awful thing to die : *Lay up a good Foundation against that Time which is to come* ; dwell much with God ; converse freely and frequently with the *Grave* ; read, hear, pray, communicate, do all the *personal and relative Duties of Life*, with *Death and Eternity* before you ; industriously cul-

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tivate the *Graces* of the Spirit of God, that you may be *strong in Faith*; your *Love*, ardent and vigorous; your *Repentance*, kindly and flowing; your *Humility*, *Patience*, *Mortification* to this World, *Spirituality* of Affection, and *Heavenly-mindedness*, upon the thriving Hand daily. This is the way to glorify God in Life, and Death; to live in *Peace*, and die in *Comfort*.

You see the Argument turns not upon the Head of *Duty* only, but the Head of *Interest* too, and *no Man did ever yet hate his own Flesh, but rather nourish and cherish it.*

4. Let it comfort us concerning our departed Friends, that when Christ call'd them hence, he found them *ready*.

For them to *die is Gain*, to whom to live was *Christ*. When they leave our World, they are in the properest Sense *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints*, and of the *Household of God*; enter'd into *Rest*; have attained; and are now *perfect*. Shall we lament *their* Advancement to the highest Happiness of which our Nature is capable, whom we tenderly love?

Had good old *Jacob* known, that his Favourite Son was giving Laws in *Egypt*, he would not have abandon'd himself to so desperate Sorrow at the Remembrance of *Joseph's* torn and bloody Garment: But while he kept poring upon his Grave, and had no other Thoughts of the Matter than that his Son was lost among the Dead, 'tis not strange that Sorrow had fill'd his Heart.

Those whom Death finds *ready* it ushers to the Beatifick Presence; here is *Fulness of Joy*, and *everlasting Pleasures*. Is it just to repine at this Change? Is it reconcilable either to the Duty we owe to God, or the Affection we profess to our departed Friends?

I have not the least *Diffidence* in saying, that I take this to have been the Case with that worthy Person Mrs. *Anne Kelley*, whose late Removal from this to a better World gave Occasion to my discoursing upon this Subject. When God call'd, she was *ready* to depart, and now possesses their Felicity, who have the all-sufficing Good for their Portion.

My Acquaintance with her being but of a short Standing (only since upon the Indisposition of her own Pastor^r she chose Occasional Communion with this Church) I am less able to draw a complete Character. What I have to offer is from *personal Knowledge*, or the most *authentick Vouchers*: and in this I am far from designing to feed the *Vanity* of any, and intend only to excite an *Emulation* of her Piety in you that hear me.

What is mention'd of *Obadiab* with so much Honour, was true in the Case of our departed Friend: *She feared God from her Youth*. I have seen it under her Hand, in some general Memoirs of her Life, that the Spirit of God began *so early*, and work'd so powerfully with her, that by the time she had reach'd to *eight Years* of Age (which goes not beyond the Stage of *Childhood*) she had in an explicit, solemn, covenant-way, given herself up to God.

Her Family, tho' of *Consideration* in the World^r, did not look upon serious Godliness *as beneath* them, but otherwise: for this Turn of Mind to the best things she attributes to the divine Bless-

* The Reverend Mr. Nesbit.

* Mrs. *Anne Kelley* was the Daughter of *Ellis Crisp*, of the County of *Surrey*, Esq; the eldest Son of *Tobias Crisp*, D. D. Minister at *Brinkworth* in *Wiltshire*; well known by his Writings.

sing upon the sound *Instructions* and holy *Example* of her Mother, some Years since with God.

Many Trees *bloom* well, yet baulk us in our Expectations of *ripe Fruit*. Some are *startled*, and never *converted*; are *almost*, and never *altogether Christians*. Their *Goodness* is like the *Morning-Cloud* and *early Dew*, which *pass away*: but this was not the Case here. The *Seed*, which when cast into the Ground was but as a *Grain of Mustard-Seed*, gradually *advanc'd* to a *large Plant*, which produc'd the *Fruits of Righteousness*. She follow'd on to know the Lord more fully, when once acquainted with him; and had *betimes* much of a filial Confidence in all her Approaches to him. *He loves those that love him; and such as seek him early shall be sure to find him.*

There was an Interval of several Years between her Conversion to God, and her renewing her baptismal Covenant at the Lord's Table. This she laments. I cannot express her Resentments better than in *her own Words*.

“ I desire (said she) to be greatly humbled for
 “ my Backwardness to partake of the Ordinance
 “ of the Lord's Supper, which my Soul has ear-
 “ nestly long'd for, for many Years. It has cost
 “ me Floods of Tears, when I have seen others
 “ sit down at this Banquet of Love, while I was
 “ shut out as unworthy to partake of that hea-
 “ venly Feast.

Her principal *Difficulties* were *these*: Her not having felt those *Terrors*, which others (whom she judg'd to be extraordinary Christians) had told her, they experienc'd in the New Birth. This put her upon questioning her State, and fill'd her with Fears, lest she should lay violent Hands on those tremendous Mysteries; *Eat and drink unworthily*. She did not remember, that legal *Terrors* in our Conversion are usually proportion'd as

to their *Degree*, to the *Measure* of actual *Guilt*, with which Conscience charges us : and that my Return to God may be *sincere*, when *early* in Life, tho' not accompanied with that *Anguish* under which they groan, who have long *continued* their Estrangements.

Another of her Difficulties was the Sense she had of her remaining *Corruptions*. She inferr'd her having *no* Grace, from what could conclude no more than her being *weak* in Grace : and while these were insuperable Obstacles in her way, as to her coming to Christ's *Table*, she blesses God for " a tender Conscience, that put her upon o-
" ther Duties ; and mentions the special *Delight*
" she had in attending upon a *preached Gospel*.

However, at length the Heavens clear'd up, these Difficulties are got over ; and *that* Duty, the Omission of which had cost Prayers and Tears, is discharg'd. In the Account she gave of the Dealings of God with her Soul, to the worthy Minister she made choice of, (Mr. Nesbit) I have seen, among many other serious and moving things in that Account, the *following*, which I shall deliver in *her own Words*.

" I have a Diffidence of my self, know that
" my corrupt Nature can do nothing acceptable
" to God ; I lay hold on the Merits of my dear
" Saviour's Sufferings, to satisfy for my Want of
" all things. I desire to apply him in all his Of-
" fices. To be *instructed* by his *Wisdom* in what
" I *know not*. To receive him as my *Propitiation*,
" *Mediator*, and *Advocate* in Heaven for me. I
" freely close with his *Kingly Office* ; and think
" it my *Privilege* to be at his *Disposal*. I choose
" the *Cross* of Christ, and Frowns of this World,
" rather than to enjoy the *Pleasures of Sin* for a
" *Season*.

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She was not, after this, without some *dark* Parts in Life ; but under every Pressure, she says, " I threw my self upon God, in and thro' Christ, " and *tho' he should slay me, I will put my Trust in* " *him.*

I cannot find, that thro' the Course of Years, in which she made a *Profession* of Religion, there *appear'd* any thing in her *Conduct*, that might hurt this Profession. They who knew her best, allow'd her to be a Person of strict, serious, unaffected, and exemplary Piety.

I have been assur'd, that *these Things* in particular were true of her. My Information is from a very good Hand.

She was a most curious Observer of *Providence*. Endeavour'd to see God's *Hand*, to *know* that she might *obey* his *Voice*, in whatever befel her, from Events of the greatest Concern, to those of less Importance.

There was another thing true of her, which shew'd that she had more than a *small* Portion of the Grace of God. 'Twas *this*, there was in her natural Temper somewhat that prompted and press'd to the resenting of an Injury with *Speed* and *Severity* ; but so far was she under the Influence of a better than her own Spirit, that the Opportunity presenting in which the Wrong done her might be reveng'd, she has embrac'd it to shew Offices of Kindness, which cost her more than *good Words*, to the *injurious* Person. These Services were done, while the Benefactor has been conceal'd : The *Pleasure* of doing good was thought sufficient *Reward*, while *others* have had *Vanity* enough to take the Reputation of her Goodness.

She was likewise remarkable for *condescending* to Persons of the *lowest Estate*, if of the *Household of Faith* ; when her *Circumstances* in the World,
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and superior *Sense* would have been too powerful Temptations to another Sort of Carriage, to many who are call'd Christians. She convers'd with them familiarly, and readily minister'd to their *Necessities*.

In the Visits I made her, during that Illness which issued in her Death, I found her in a truly *serious* and *composed* Frame of Mind; neither cast down with disquieting *Fears*, nor lifted up with *Joy thro' believing*; the Conversation I had with her gave Occasion to her speaking to me *thus*;

“ I have frequently and sincerely cast my self, and all that concerns me, at the Redeemer's Feet. Death has nothing in it to *me* that is terrible, tho' I see it approaching: I trust that I shall not be dismayed when it is at Hand. I think I *presume* not in applying *David's Words* to my self, *God has made with me an everlasting Covenant*.

What supported her upon the Review of the many *Infirmities* in Life, to which she was conscious, was a firm Belief of the Redeemer's perfect *Righteousness*, and the Imputation of this to every Child of God; the Immutability of his *Love and Covenant*.

She was in a patient, humble, resigned Frame, neither choosing Life, nor Death, the last time I waited upon her. Assur'd me with Pleasure, she had join'd in the Prayers offer'd up to God on her Account, and spoke little more: Her Dis-temper grew stronger upon her, and in the Compass of a few Hours afterwards, she was releas'd from all the Inconveniences of an embodied State; taken to the World, *where the Inhabitant says no more I am sick*.

There is one thing which I must not omit; I take it to be very uncommon. I was speaking to her of the Reality of Religion, the Composure
and

and Quiet under every Burthen which a Christian found in the faithful Discharge of Duty; she said, " That she could *set her Seal to the Truth of this* ; " and then added, " That from her first sitting down at the Lord's Supper, she never once attended that Ordinance, without the special, sensible *Manifestation* of the Love of God ; and that when she communicated last with us, which was on the last Sacrament-Day but one^f, she experienc'd so much of Heaven in the Ordinance, as that she wish'd to be dissolv'd ; to go from that lower Table, to drink the Wine new in her Father's Kingdom.

May this Providence be sanctified to those who are more immediately concern'd : O beware of both *these* Extremes, neither *despise this Chast'ning of the Lord*, nor *faint when rebuk'd by him*. Reverence the Hand that smites you, and say, *when he takes away, as well as when he gives, blessed be the Name of the Lord*. See that you are better instructed as to the Vanity of this World, the Uncertainty of Life, the Reasonableness of Religion ; be ye Followers of your now glorified Relations, as they have been the Followers of Christ ; that a Promise being left us of entering into the same Rest, you may not come short of it, thro' an evil Heart of Unbelief. Give the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End. It will avail nothing to say, *We have had Abraham to our Father* : None shall partake of the Inheritance of his Children, who have not follow'd his Faith, and trod in his Steps.

May what has been said quicken us all to the Practice of the Duty enforc'd in my Text. Let us pray for the Assistance of the blessed Spirit,

without whose gracious Influences all the Calls, Invitations, and Counsels in the World will be lost upon us : Seeing we are encompass'd with such a Cloud of Witnesses, may we lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which easily besets us, that we may run with Patience the Race set before us.

When we have done, and suffer'd God's Will, we shall be glorified together ; receiv'd to the blessed World, where Love shall be the Completion of our Souls ; and Praise, our everlasting Employment.

May the good Spirit lead us all to this Land of Uprightness.

F I N I S.



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